Risk Report

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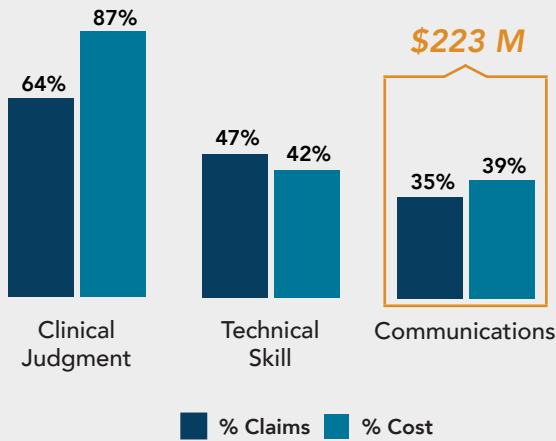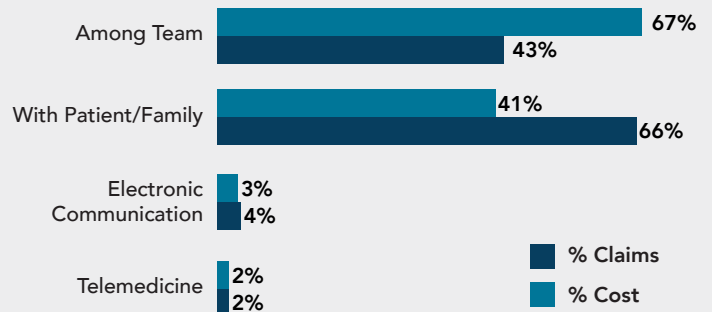
Reducing Harm with Improved Team Communication

In our analysis of Constellation medical professional liability claims*, communication breakdowns are a contributing factor in **35%** of harm events accounting for **39%** of costs with total cost of **$223M** over 7 years.
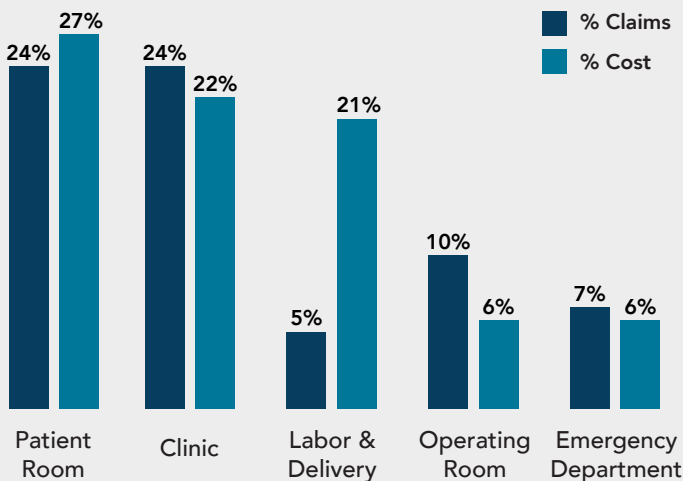
The Cost of Communication Breakdowns

Clinical Judgment: 64% % Claims, 87% % Cost
Technical Skill: 47% % Claims, 42% % Cost
Communications: 35% % Claims, 39% % Cost — $223 M

■ % Claims ■ % Cost

Communication Breakdowns

Among Team: 67% % Cost, 43% % Claims
With Patient/Family: 41% % Claims, 66% % Cost
Electronic Communication: 3% % Cost, 4% % Claims
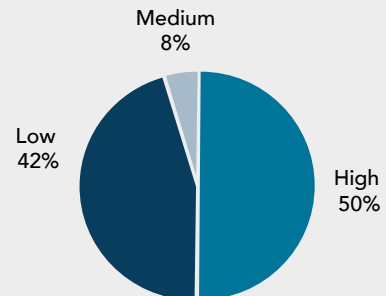Telemedicine: 2% % Claims, 2% % Cost

■ % Claims ■ % Cost

Communication breakdowns can occur among the care team (physician, NP/PA, nurse, tech, CNA, lab) and/or with the patient, senior living resident and family. A single harm event may involve multiple communication factors.

Top Locations Involved in Team Communication Breakdowns

■ % Claims ■ % Cost

Patient Room: 24% % Claims, 27% % Cost
Clinic: 24% % Claims, 22% % Cost
Labor & Delivery: 5% % Claims, 21% % Cost
Operating Room: 10% % Claims, 6% % Cost
Emergency Department: 7% % Claims, 6% % Cost

Severity of Harm % Claims
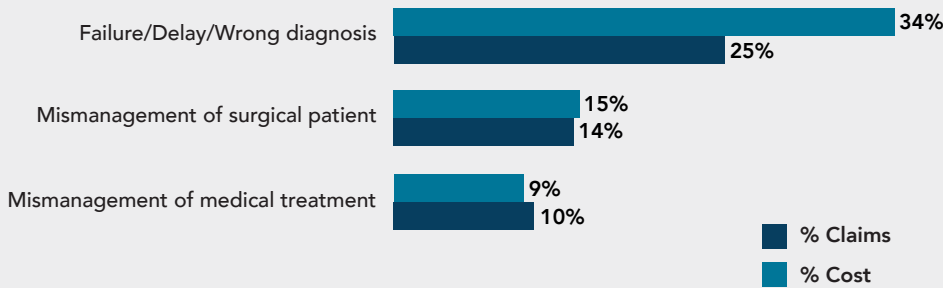

Medium 8%
Low 42%
High 50%

NAIC Severity Scale

- High severity includes death, quadriplegia, brain damage

- Medium severity includes loss/damage to organ, infection, delayed recovery

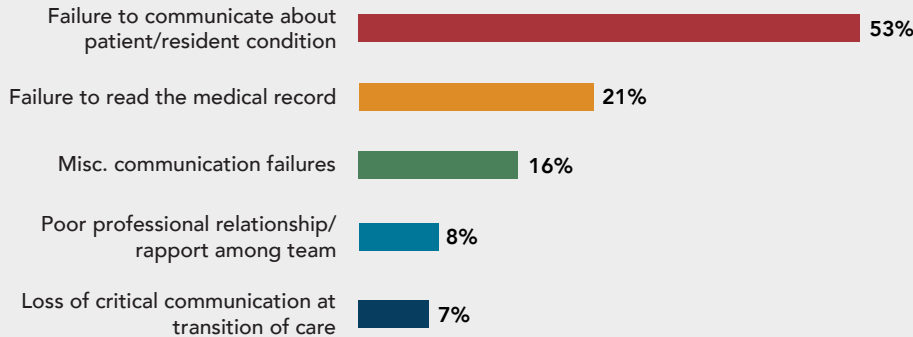- Low severity includes minor scars, mental distress, no delay in recovery

*Constellation MPL claims reviewed 12/31/2020

Top Allegations

Allegation	% Cost	% Claims
Failure/Delay/Wrong diagnosis	34%	25%
Mismanagement of surgical patient	15%	14%
Mismanagement of medical treatment	9%	10%

Legend:
- % Claims
- % Cost

A 16-month delay in diagnosing colon cancer occurred when an office team member and physician failed to recognize an abnormal pathology report following a colonoscopy on a 62-year-old woman **because the information about the cancerous polyp was buried in the report.** *A letter sent to the patient erroneously identified the polyps as benign in error. The cancer advanced to Stage IV during the delay.*

Top Contributing Factors**

Factor	%
Failure to communicate about patient/resident condition	53%
Failure to read the medical record	21%
Misc. communication failures	16%
Poor professional relationship/rapport among team	8%
Loss of critical communication at transition of care	7%

During a handoff of care, a delivering obstetrician **failed to mention that the woman he had just performed a cesarean delivery on had a platelet disorder.** *The lack of this vital information led to a failure to appreciate hemodynamic changes causing a surgical delay which contributed to the death of a 36-year-old woman.*

**These factors contribute to harm/malpractice claims and are amenable to risk mitigation strategies. A single harm event may involve multiple contributing factors.

What You Can Do To Reduce Communication Harm

Learn about the causes and contributing factors to communication breakdown harm

Assess your risk for communication breakdown harm events

Enhance communication among the care team with teamwork training and tools

Analyze communication harm events and implement strategies to reduce risk

Good for care teams. Good for business.

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